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CRITICAL REMARKS

ON

PIZARRO,

A

TRAGEDY,

TAKEN FROM THE GERMAN DRAMA OF

KOTZEBUE,

AND

ADAPTED TO THE ENGLISH STAGE

BY

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN.

WITH

INCIDENTAL OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

SUBJECT OF THE DRAMA.

BY

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CRITICAL REMARKS

ON

PIZARRO.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Critical Remarks were written on the ſpur of the occaſion, to fulfil a duty impoſed on the Author as Member of a Literary Society*. They were read and diſcuſſed at two meetings of that Society, at a time when provincial curioſity (which had ſtood on the tiptoe of expectation) was firſt gratified with the repreſentation of Pizarro.

If the firſt appearance of this bright Star in the Theatrical Hemiſphere aſtoniſhed the Inhabitants of the Metropolis (accuſtomed to marvellous ſights), and drew them forth in crowds, night after night, to contemplate its dazzling Splendour; no wonder then it was gazed upon with equal, if not ſuperior, rapture, by its planet-ſtruck admirers in a provincial

* Literary and Philoſophical Society of Mancheſter.

Town. Like Aaron's Rod, the Tragedy of Pizarro ſwallowed up every other Competitor. It not only took ſole poſſeſſion of the Theatre, but alſo intruded itſelf into every private Society. Indeed, the high degree of Intereſt which this Drama excited in the place of the Author's reſidence, has been his chief inducement for publiſhing the preſent Critique. He has purpoſely avoided entering into any compariſon between the reſpective Merits and Defects of the original German Author and his Adapter.

The following Remarks apply ſolely to the Drama adapted to the Engliſh Stage and publiſhed by Mr. Sheridan, who, in his Dedication, ſeems to dwell with no ſmall degree of complacency on the ſucceſs of his adopted favourite.

In juſtice to himſelf, and the Author of an ingenious "Critique on the Tragedy of Pizarro *," the Writer of the following criticiſm is under the neceſſity of avowing

* A Critique on Pizarro. Publiſhed by W. Miller, Old Bond Street.

his

his entire ignorance of the exiſtence of ſuch a performance, until his own had been prepared for the Preſs.

That a coincidence may be obſerved between ſeveral of the Remarks in that "Critique" and the preſent Work, cannot be denied. But this coincidence relates almoſt ſolely to the more obvious defects of Pizarro, and to the circumſtance of pointing out their abſurdity by expoſing them to the ſhafts of the Adapter's own Ridicule. It is preſumed that, in other reſpects, the two performances ſo materially differ, as to juſtify the Author in ſubmitting to the Public theſe further Strictures on a Tragedy, which has taken almoſt entire poſſeſſion of the Stage, and gone through numerous editions from the Preſs.

Mancheſter,
April 14th, 1800.

CRITICAL REMARKS, &c.

" Reſpicere exemplar vitæ morumque jubebo
" Doctum imitatorem, et vivas hinc ducere voces*."
HORAT. de Arte Poeticâ.

IT is the opinion of an elegant Writer and judicious Critic †, that a perfect Tragedy is the higheſt effort of poetical genius. Indeed the difficulty of attaining excellence in dramatic compoſition, is manifeſted by the ſmall number of Tragic pieces, which, ſince the origin of the Drama, have been ſanctioned by critical and univerſal approbation.

Our own Age and Country afford too many proofs of the truth of the above remark. Me-

* " Then let a ſkilful writer ſcan
" The life and character of man,
" And from that genuine ſource diſpenſe
" Words that accord with Truth and Senſe."
BOSCAWEN's Horace.

† Addiſon.

diocrity

diocrity in this delightful and inſtructive ſpecies of compoſition is but ſeldom attained. Yet, if popular applauſe from the crowded benches of a Theatre, and rapid and multiplied editions from the Preſs *, were ſufficient proofs of the real excellence of dramatic writing, the works of former days muſt "hide their diminiſh'd heads."

To the German Muſe we are indebted for this wonderful revolution of the Drama.

Perhaps not one of the productions of the German School has excited more attention and been crowned with more applauſe, than the ſubject of the preſent criticiſm. As the joint production of Two of the moſt celebrated dramatic Writers of Germany and England (Kotzebue and Sheridan) it not only rouſed a ſpirit of univerſal curioſity, but likewiſe, from its flattering reception, challenged the ſcrutiny of general criticiſm.

I truſt then, that the celebrity of the performance, and the influence it may have on public taſte, will apologize for entering, ſomewhat at length, into an analyſis of its various merits and defects. I propoſe to conſider this Drama under the following heads :—

1ſt, The Fable; and the compoſition, or arrangement, of the Incidents.

2d, The Characters and Manners.

* Pizarro has gone through Fifteen Editions.

3d,

3d, The Sentiments.
4th, The Style.
5th, The Moral.

The Fable.

IT is not my intention to diſcuſs minutely the queſtion, whether the Fable of the Tragic Drama ſhould be founded in fiction, or derived from hiſtorical facts? The Author having preferred the latter, I conſider him as happy in the choice of his ſubject. He muſt poſſeſs a wonderful ſhare of invention and very uncommon ingenuity, who, at this period, could ſtrike out any thing novel and intereſting from Grecian or Roman Hiſtory. The Romans for the moſt part copied the Grecian Tragedies, or founded their Fables on the Hiſtory of Greece. The early prejudice imbibed in favour of thoſe Gods of their idolatry, the Heroes of Greece and Rome, has led Writers, in ſucceeding ages, to adopt their characters and exploits, with an equal degree of fondneſs, as fit ſubjects for the Tragic Muſe. The Romances of the middle ages have alſo furniſhed plots to ſo many of our dramatic Writers, that no ſmall difficulty, at this period, would occur, in ſelecting any worthy of adoption from a ſource ſo nearly exhauſted.

The

The æra of the conqueſt of Peru is neither too remote nor too familiar; but has acquired that venerable caſt and air, which Tragedy demands, and Time alone can give. The diſcovery of a new World, and the eſtabliſhment of a vaſt Empire by an obſcure adventurer, are circumſtances well calculated to excite attention and command admiration. But, in the ſtructure of his Fable, the Author has groſsly violated hiſtorical probability. I need not enlarge here on the particulars of his deviation from well known hiſtorical facts. If we wiſh to be acquainted with the tranſactions of Pizarro, we need only to conſult the luminous pages of Robertſon. We ſhall there find, that the timid and wretched Peruvians, diſtracted by civil broils, as well as vanquiſhed by the ſuperior Arms and Courage of the Spaniards, bent under the iron yoke of Pizarro and his blood-ſtained followers. Inſtead of Atahualpa (commonly written Ataliba) being the conqueror of Pizarro, he became a royal Puppet in his hands; and, when intereſt and danger ſeemed to demand the ſacrifice, he was baſely condemned, after a mock trial, to be burnt alive: but by the tender mercies of his judges, his puniſhment was commuted to ſtrangling. With reſpect to the introduction of thoſe Characters which Hiſtory is ſilent upon, or a deſcription of circumſtances connected with

the

the main ſtory and ſupported by probability*, the dramatic Poet has free ſcope for the exerciſe of his invention. If the Tragic Writer were to relate every circumſtance juſt as it occurred, with hiſtoric fidelity, that unity of action, or ſkilful arrangement of the Incidents, which conſtitute a regular drama, would be unattainable by any exertion of his art. But there are limits to be placed to the exerciſe of this poetical licence. Fiction muſt not predominate over Truth. Their happy union, as the Roman Critic obſerves, muſt be the Poet's object:

"Atque ita mentitur, ſic veris falſa remiſcet,
"Primo ne medium, medio ne diſcrepet imum†."

Ariſtotle, in his Art of Poetry, notices: "That in Tragedy it often happens, we are con-"tented with one or two Names that are "known; and all the reſt are invented. It is

* Abbé du Bos in his Critical Reflections ſtates, "That a Tragic Poet acts contrary to his art, when he tranſgreſſes in too groſs a manner, againſt Hiſtory, Chronology, or Geography, by advancing facts that are contradicted by theſe Sciences."

† "While to ſuch points his fiction tends,
"So aptly Truth with Falſehood blends,
"That all the parts to one deſign,
"Beginning, middle, end, combine."
HORACE's Art of Poetry: Boſcawen.

"not

" not therefore neceſſary always *ſcrupulouſly* to " follow known Fables, from whence the ſub- " jects of Tragedies are generally drawn."

To heighten the pleaſure ariſing from Veriſimilitude, and thus more powerfully to affect our feelings, a dramatic Author ſelects ſome intereſting portion of Hiſtory, as the foundation of his ſubject. He certainly gains ſome advantages by this method; but he alſo expoſes himſelf to inconveniencies of perhaps equal moment. He muſt be fettered by the trammels of hiſtoric facts. He cannot violate theſe truths without exciting a diſguſt, equal to the pleaſure communicated by an adherence to hiſtorical evidence. It is within the limits of Probability, that an Elvira might have accompanied Pizarro in his adventures in the new World, and yet Hiſtory be ſilent on that head. Much leſs can any objection be urged againſt Rolla and Cora, with many other fictitious Peruvian Characters *. But when Alonzo, not known in Hiſtory, teaches the Peruvians to worſt the Spaniards in pitched Battles; ſlays their Commander; ſettles the Peruvian King upon his throne; and finally expels the Spaniards from all their conqueſts;—inſtead of yielding paſſive acquieſcence to the monſtrous

* Marmontel, in his delightful fiction of the " Inca of Peru," furniſhed theſe additional Characters.

fable,

fable, we turn aſide, and cry out with the Poet,

" Quodcunque oſtendis mihi ſic, incredulus odi *."

Having ſtated objections to the Author's manner of treating the Subject, I proceed to conſider the compoſition or arrangement of the Incidents †.

* " Such Scenes we ne'er admit as true,
" And, diſbelieving, hate to view."
HORACE.

† Ariſtotle in his Art of Poetry ſeems to conſider the compoſition of the Fable as the moſt eſſential part of a Tragedy, as requiring Invention (with him) the characteriſtic of a Poet. Beſides as he conſiders Tragedy to be properly an imitation not of Men, but of their Actions, Lives, good or ill Fortune, the more naturally and faithfully theſe are repreſented in Action, the more they will be likely to excite the ſympathy and improve the paſſions of the Spectators.

No better reaſon can be given for appealing to the Dogmas of eſtabliſhed Critics, ſuch as Ariſtotle and Horace, than what is contained in the following remarks of an elegant Critic: " Rules themſelves are indeed nothing but an appeal to experience, concluſions drawn from wide and general obſervation of the aptneſs of certain means to produce thoſe impreſſions. It may be affirmed univerſally of all didactic writing, that it is employed in referring particular facts to general principles. General principles themſelves can often be referred to others more general; and theſe again carried ſtill higher, till we come to a ſingle principle in which all the reſt are involved. When this is done, Science of every kind has attained its higheſt perfection." HURD.

In

In treating on this part of the Subject, it is not my intention to give a regular ſketch of the whole plot of this drama; but chiefly to point out what I conſider to be irregular and inconſiſtent in the Compoſition and arrangement of the various Incidents. The violation of the Dramatic Unities of Action, Time, and Place, was conſidered by the ancient Critics as an inſuperable obſtacle to the Merit or Succeſs of a dramatic Compoſition. But, happily for the intereſt of the drama, our own Country has produced dramatic Writers, who, unfettered by general Rules, have ſo overpowered the impaſſioned feelings of their Audience, as to tranſport them with rapidity over the boundleſs extent of time and ſpace. The truly inſpired Poet may ſafely neglect the Dogmas of rigid criticiſm. He appeals to a higher Tribunal—to Sentiment *.

* "Ille per extentum funem mihi poſſe videtur
"Ire poëta, meum qui pectus inaniter angit,
"Irritat, mulcet, falſis terroribus implet,
"Ut magus; et modo me Thebis, modo ponit Athenis."
HORAT.

"That Bard I deem of higheſt powers poſſeſt,
"Who with fictitious anguiſh racks my breaſt:
"Who irritates and ſoothes, whoſe magic charms
"Fill me with terrible, though falſe, alarms:
"Who bears me, as he ſhifts the Scene, at will
"To Thebes or Athens by his wond'rous ſkill."
BOSCAWEN.

In

In Pizarro, the three dramatic unities have not occupied an equal degree of the Author's attention. The Action, I conceive, not to be ſufficiently ſimple. Yet, upon the whole, the epiſodical parts are ſubſervient to the main deſign. That unity of Action ſo rigidly inſiſted upon by the Greeks, and followed by ſome of the French Writers, would not ſuit a Britiſh Audience. Nor indeed is the pleaſure ariſing from the introduction of a variety of Characters, force of Contraſt, and ſurprize of Incident, to be ſacrificed to the preſervation of ſtrict unity in the action of the drama. If the action be not interrupted, nor the main ſtory unneceſſarily broken by extraneous matter, the Poet may be permitted to diverſify his plot, by introducing a variety of Characters and Incidents. Undoubtedly, in Pizarro the Incidents become crowded, eſpecially in the laſt Act: And indeed the Action is ſo much confuſed, by the Clang of Arms and Shouts of Battle, that the Author may boaſt, with Mr. Bays in the Rehearſal, that "It ſhall Drum, Trumpet, Shout "and Battle, egad, with any of the moſt war-"like Tragedies, either ancient or modern."

The unity of Time is ſufficiently attended to. The Action is comprized within the generally preſcribed period of Twenty-four Hours, as the Play opens with the morning of one day, and cloſes early at the ſame period of the enſuing day.

pay. The unity of Place has not been ſo ſtrictly preſerved. Yet, the liberties the Author has taken on this head, may be perhaps juſtified by the practice of the ſtricteſt obſervers of the unities in our moſt regular dramas. Notwithſtanding, I conceive that, during the ſame Act, a *ſudden* change of place, without *preparation* or notice, tends greatly to deſtroy dramatic illuſion*. In the Second Scene of the Third Act, a glaring inſtance of this impropriety occurs. In the previous Scene, Rolla and Cora had appeared in a Wood cloſe by the Peruvian Camp, from whence the latter flies in diſtraction to ſeek Alonzo, ſuppoſed to be ſlain. In

* An ingenious Critic, Lord Kaims, in his Elements of Criticiſm, ſtrongly contends for *no change* of Place, but after an Interval or Act. A change of Place therefore during an Act, ought never to be indulged, as it breaks its unity. For, "after ſuch an Interval as an Act," the Critic obſerves, "the Imagination adapts itſelf to any place "that is neceſſary, as readily as at the commencement of "the piece." This critical Canon ſeems to be derived from the practice of the French Stage. Yet I think it may with ſafety be violated. It is only neceſſary that the tranſition be not too abrupt. For inſtance; the unity of Action ſuffers no interruption, by the change of place in the Third Scene of the Second Act, as we are prepared for this Scene (which repreſents a Sacrifice in the Temple of the Sun) by Alonzo's obſervation of the King's approach, as denoted by the ſound of Muſic. By this anticipation, the unities of Time and Place ſuffer ſo little interruption, as not to diminiſh the force of the Spectator's illuſion.

a trice

a trice the Scene ſhifts, and behold Pizarro in his Tent! Not prepared for this tranſition by any previous event, I muſt appeal to the teſt of general feeling, whether this change do not weaken the impreſſion of Reality? In the laſt Act, the unity of Place ſuffers a great interruption. The Scene is *unexpectedly* ſhifted, no leſs than thrice, from the Spaniſh Camp to the Tent of Ataliba, and from thence to the retreat among the Rocks. But it muſt in candor be allowed, that the unities of Time and Place (although contributing much to the "Cunning of the Scene") may with impunity be encroached upon, when the beauties of Character and Sentiment, and the Intereſt of dramatic Situation, demand ſuch a ſacrifice. In the arrangement of the Incidents, a ſtricter rule is to be followed. Their mutual dependence upon, and connection with each other; and the Motives and Means, which produce the different events, ſhould be clearly unfolded to the Spectator. In the Firſt Act of Pizarro, a ſtrict attention has been paid, not only to the Unities, but alſo to the natural and eaſy development of the Plot. But what a falling off is there in the ſucceeding Acts! In the Fourth Scene of the Second Act, an old blind Man and Boy are introduced, without any apparent motive or deſign, into the heat of Battle, near to the Camp. To this place the King retreats

wounded; and, ſtrange to tell, orders his guard to leave him in a place ſo expoſed, that a ſoldier had been diſpatched juſt before to 'warn the helpleſs to retreat farther among the Rocks!' Yet *unarmed* and wounded is Ataliba left, by his Officers and Guard, without a ſingle remonſtrance or hint on their part of the danger of his ſituation. The Second Scene of the Third Act preſents a ſtriking inſtance of inattention on the part of the Author. Cora and her Child enter a Wood where they are joined by Rolla, who remarks that he had been *ſummoned by Cora* to this Interview. But this information is new to the Audience. They may indeed ſuppoſe that, like the Phyſician and Gentleman-Uſher in the Rehearſal, "they "had been talking of this a pretty while with-"out." The Actors are compelled to fill up this chaſm by Pantomimic repreſentation. Would not all difficulty have been removed, in a much more ſimple manner, by a little whiſpering between the parties?—Mr. Bays practiſed this mode with great ſucceſs. The interview between Pizarro, Elvira, and Alonzo, (although the dialogue be ſpirited and characteriſtic) drags rather heavily, from its length and want of variety. Indeed the whole of the Third Act (of which this Scene compriſes at leaſt two-thirds) is ſo barren of Incident, and full of mere declamatory dialogue, that none but

but the moſt ſkilful and energetic Actors can render it in any degree tolerable.

The Fourth Act lies open to numerous and obvious objections. There is ſuch poverty of Invention, and want of Connection in the chain of Incidents, as to reflect diſcredit on the Author's dramatic ſkill, or at leaſt to convict him of culpable inattention. A Peruvian General, of diſtinguiſhed Character and Renown even among the Spaniards, under the ſtale diſguiſe of a Monk's Habit, is ſuppoſed to have paſſed undiſcovered into the inmoſt receſſes of the Spaniſh Camp. But that by the mere exchange of a Friar's Robe and Cowl, Alonzo ſhould be ſo diſguiſed (notwithſtanding his legs were fettered with Chains) as to permit his paſſing through a guarded Priſon, and finally to effect his eſcape, habited as a Spaniſh Prieſt, through the Spaniſh Camp and Out-poſts, to the Peruvian Army:—are circumſtances ſo marvellous, as may indeed "elevate and ſurprize," but muſt fail to convince any other than a credulous and inattentive Audience.

After Alonzo's eſcape, Elvira next appears. She had previouſly diſpatched a Soldier, to acquaint Alonzo with her intended viſit. The Soldier obtained admiſſion, by means of a Paſſport from Elvira. This Lady indeed appears to be endowed with very extraordinary authority over the whole of the Camp; yet it is ſcarce-

ly credible, that Pizarro ſhould have permitted ſuch a degree of delegated power to remain with Elvira, after what had paſſed between them in the preceding Act. For we there find that Pizarro treats her interceſſion for Alonzo with jealous ſcorn and contumely. They ſeparate mutually inflamed with Anger and Diſtruſt. Her ſubſequent conduct plainly ſhews, that no reconciliation had been effected*.

After obtaining Rolla's real, or ſeeming, aſſent to aſſaſſinate Pizarro, Elvira urges the neceſſity of his firſt deſtroying the Centinel, before they can reach Pizarro's Tent. Yet this very Centinel was removed, by Elvira's order, to the outer Porch. What a pity this truly complaiſant Soldier had not been directed to ſtep a little farther out of the way, conſidering that Elvira entered the dungeon with the avowed purpoſe of effecting Alonzo's eſcape! But then we ſhould have been deprived of Rolla's heroic forbearance, ſentimental effuſions, and moral reaſoning; when inſtigated coolly to murder a man placed at his poſt of duty. This is truly a critical ſituation for the parties. No time was to be loſt. How then do they contrive to extricate themſelves? That remains a

* Truly, the facility with which Elvira gains admiſſion to Alonzo, who was condemned to die on the ſame morning, and to whom acceſs was moſt ſtrictly forbidden, is not one of the leaſt marvellous incidents in the Play.

ſecret

ſecret locked up in the Author's breaſt. What artifice the tender-hearted Elvira uſed to gain over the "Old Caſtilian," (whom ſhe had previouſly devoted to deſtruction) is moſt unfairly and diſcourteouſly (I deem it) kept a profound ſecret from the Audience.

In the Third Scene, Elvira informs Rolla (having firſt conducted him into Pizarro's Tent) that ſhe will withdraw the attendant Guard. One might have imagined, that the Guard would have prevented Rolla's acceſs to the Tent. But, as Sneer ſays in the Critic, we "may account for it" by ſuppoſing that, like Mr. Puff's Centinels, they were aſleep "as faſt "as Watchmen;" and that, when the drowſy fit had left them, Elvira had only to order them off their Poſt. Yet this very Guard, ſo ſeaſonably removed, it appears muſt have remained within ear-ſhot. For they at firſt ruſh forward on Pizarro's Summons, but ſtand ſo amazed at Elvira's Invective, that although ſcolded, threatened, and ſtormed at, by their indignant General, they quietly ſuffer her to exhauſt the full torrent of her rage.

The Fifth Act does not want Incident. Lightning, Thunder, and a Song, introduce the wretched Cora. But this Storm is ſucceeded by a Calm. Alonzo's diſtant voice is heard. The vivid lightnings ceaſe to flaſh, the harſh thunder dies away, and Cora ruſhes into Alonzo's arms. Wonders now like Alps on Alps ariſe.

ariſe. That Rolla ſhould eſcape, with Cora's Child in his arms, from amidſt the centre of an Army, deſtroy a Bridge, and ſlay a number of his purſuers, appears to me, I confeſs, to border a little on the marvellous. But what words can expreſs our aſtoniſhment at the ſequel? Pizarro attempts to carry off, by ſurprize, the Peruvian Women and Treaſures, concealed in a receſs among the Rocks. Defeated and ſurrounded, he fights in ſingle combat with Alonzo, who, beaten down and diſarmed by his Adverſary, is on the point of being deſtroyed, when lo! Elvira, habited in the very dreſs in which Pizarro firſt beheld her, preſents herſelf before the Conqueror; and, thus ſtriking terror into his ſoul, renders him an eaſy conqueſt to his antagoniſt Alonzo*.

But to ſay nothing of the difficulty of evading Pizarro's peremptory orders for the inſtant execution of Alonzo, I would aſk from what motive could ſhe have been induced to the undertaking; and how was it practicable for her, habited as a Nun, to have penetrated through

* On the Stage, this Heroine, although habited as a Nun, is accoutred with a Sword, (certainly a more deadly weapon than the lightning of her Eye) with which ſhe furniſhes Alonzo at the very moment of his defeat. I will not preſume to determine whether this *after-thought* be an improvement of the original idea. It ſeems more level to the capacity of the 'Million,' and is greeted, I am informed, with prodigious burſts of applauſe!

the

the inmoſt receſſes of the Peruvian ſtrong-holds, to the place where Pizarro was defeated? If the intention were to terrify Pizarro at the criſis of Alonzo's defeat, Elvira muſt have been bleſſed with the gift of ſecond-ſight to have foreſeen this event. Indeed, nothing leſs than magical aid, or (as ſhe obſerves) "an awful "impulſe" can account for her opportune arrival, to put the finiſhing ſtroke to the Cataſtrophe. But may not Mr. Puff's obſervation, on a ſimilar occaſion, furniſh the true Key to the marvellous events with which this Scene abounds? "Now Gentlemen," obſerves that judicious Character, "this Scene goes entirely "for what we call *Situation* and *Stage-effect*, by "which the greateſt applauſe may be obtained "without the aſſiſtance of Language, Senti-"ment, or Character."

On the Characters and Manners.

AN attention to the Manners, in every dramatic work, is of the utmoſt importance. By this term is to be underſtood, not only the preſervation of individual and general Character *, but

* "——— Honoratum ſi forte reponis Achillem,
"Impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer," &c.
HORAT. de Arte Poeticâ.

"Thus

but likewiſe a regard to the general qualities and actions of Man, abſtractedly conſidered. Ariſtotle compares (in the work before quoted) the Manners, in a dramatic Work, to the Colours in a Picture. "A Tragedy although excellent in "plot, yet deficient in Character, may be com-"pared (he ſays) to a well-drawn picture, where "the moſt glowing colours are mixed on the "Canvas without order or deſign." And he obſerves that ſuch a picture would not give half ſo much pleaſure, as the well-wrought Sketches of a ſimple draught. The Manners alſo include a juſt repreſentation of the modes and cuſtoms of a people, as varied by their government, peculiar prejudices, Laws, and Religion. Theſe have not been ſufficiently preſerved in Pizarro. The Manners and Sentiments, on many occaſions, belong more to the Spaniſh (or rather European) than to the Peruvian character. This is more eſpecially to be obſerved in the Sentiments, as I ſhall have occaſion to ſhew when I treat on this part of the ſubject. At preſent I intend to confine my obſervations to individual Characters. Among the chief of them Rolla ſtands pre-eminent, in the eſtima-

"Thus if perchance you give to fame
"Achilles, ever honour'd name!
"Let him with paſſion wildly rave,
"Inexorable, fiercely brave," &c.

BOSCAWEN'S Horace.

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tion both of the Author and the Public. Indeed the Character is boldly conceived and ſpiritedly executed, but I cannot add juſtly finiſhed. His conduct, when Elvira inſtigates him to the aſſaſſination of Pizarro, is at leaſt equivocal. His expreſſion to Elvira, "And for Peru thou periſheſt! Give me the Dagger,"—ſeems to inſinuate that he was aſhamed of his reluctance, and had reſolved to comply with her propoſal. And indeed it is only after an evident ſtruggle, when in Pizarro's tent, that he abandons his intention. But in the manner of doing this, how can we reconcile his apparently ungenerous conduct towards Elvira, with his Character as a Hero? What could be his motive for rouſing Pizarro from his ſlumber, when he had previouſly determined to ſpare his life? He muſt have been ſenſible that Elvira's life would become forfeited by the diſcovery. I ſee no mode of explaining his conduct, except that he wiſhed to prove to Pizarro, that, of the two, he was the better Chriſtian.

Would it not have been more conſiſtent with the ſuppoſed Wiſdom and Generoſity of his Character, to have retired to the dungeon, and magnanimouſly waited there his doom: or, at leaſt, to have endeavoured to eſcape with Elvira, rather than have compromiſed for his own ſafety by expoſing her to the utmoſt peril? For how was it probable he could have conceal-

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ed from Pizarro the means by which he obtained admiſſion, ſuppoſing Elvira's ſtrange indiſcretion had not led to the diſcovery? There is another trait in his Character, which (in my opinion) tends to degrade the Hero in a much more important point of view. He is ſuppoſed to be the Lover of Cora, whom he had heroically reſigned to the more favoured Alonzo. An intimate Friendſhip ſubſiſted between the parties. When Rolla undertook the generous—the heroic taſk of ſacrificing himſelf in order to obtain Alonzo's releaſe, we admire and applaud the deed. Why does it claim our admiration? Becauſe we ſuppoſe that the motives, which prompted its execution, were not only honourable to the human Character, but even worthy of a Hero. For to releaſe a General like Alonzo, by whom the Peruvians had been inſtructed in thoſe warlike arts, which their Enemies had often practiſed with Succeſs; and who had turned the tide of victory to the Peruvian Standard: to ſave the life of a much valued Friend, and to reſtore a Huſband and a Father to a diſconſolate Wife and helpleſs Child—would have been motives ſo noble and conſiſtent with the virtues of a Hero, as to have ſtamped the Character of Rolla with the higheſt praiſe. But when we learn from Rolla's lips, that he was moved to this noble act of ſelf-deſtruction " by a motive, ſtronger far than

Friendſhip

Friendſhip—By Love,"—and for Cora! the Wife of Alonzo! and a Mother too!—our better feelings recoil at the profanation of the term; and, although we may pity the weakneſs of the *Man*, we look with contempt on the character of the *Hero*. Indeed, ſo fiercely does this paſſion rage in Rolla's breaſt, that, in a preceding Scene, amidſt the wild diſtractions of lamenting Grief, when Cora ſuppoſes Alonzo to be dead, does he preſent himſelf as a Huſband to her, and a Father to her Child. Is this the conduct of a man of refined ſentiment, generoſity, and wiſdom: in ſhort, of a Hero? Certainly not. It may be urged in behalf of the Author, that this conduct of Rolla gives riſe to one of the main Incidents in the Play, by which his Character is placed in the moſt intereſting point of view. But is propriety and conſiſtency of Character to be ſacrificed to the pleaſure ariſing from the ſurprize of Incident, or intereſt of Situation? If Rolla be deprived of any portion of his refined, and almoſt ſpiritualized, affection for Cora, his character, inſtead of engaging our Sympathy, would excite our horror and deteſtation. Indeed, to none but thoſe who are alive to the impreſſions of romantic gallantry, and habituated to the contemplation of the marvellous in Morals and Sentiment, can the character of Rolla be conſidered as proper for dramatic repreſentation.

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If we however ſhould admit that the Author was juſtified in aſſigning the paſſion of Love for an Object (whoſe ſituation precluded a return of affection) as the nobleſt and moſt powerful motive for all the heroic actions of Rolla; yet, when we view his conduct, not only as a Lover, but alſo as a Politician, a General, and an Orator, we cannot but conſider the Author as ſtrangely departing from Truth and Nature in repreſenting ſuch incongruity in the Manners of Tragedy. For, inſtead of a half-civilized Savage (ſuch as the beſt of the Peruvians muſt have been) we find Rolla's character repreſented as a compound of the European gallantry of a former age, mixed with modern German Sentiment, and a tolerable ſprinkling of Engliſh Manners. Elvira ſtands prominent among the group of Perſonages in this Drama. The Author ſeems to have beſtowed no common pains, to render her an object of Sympathy and Intereſt. Her ſentiments are lofty, her language energetic, and the virtuous ſtruggles of repentance and remorſe are forcibly depicted. Yet, on a cloſe inveſtigation of the Character, it does not ſtrike me as founded in Nature, nor conſiſtently ſupported as drawn by the Author. That a cloiſtered recluſe ſhould, on the firſt mention of Pizarro's exploits, conceive a violent attachment for his Perſon and Character, is an extravagant ſuppoſition; but that ſhe

ſhould afterwards be ſeduced by this illiterate, ferocious, and every-way unpoliſhed Adventurer—(the *murderer* of her *Brother* by his Sword, and of her *Mother* through Grief)—to abandon her noble Family, her Fame, her Home; to ſhare the dangers, humours, and crimes of ſuch a Lover—is an outrage againſt probability, and in contradiction to the beſt feelings of the human mind. None but an abandoned character could have acted like Elvira. Yet is ſhe depicted as poſſeſſing ſenſibility, moral feeling, a high tone of ſentiment, and great powers of Mind! But when ſhe does appear upon the ſcene of action, is there not great inconſiſtency in her conduct? It appears that jealouſy and revenge urged her to conceive the deſign of aſſaſſinating Pizarro; but afterwards we learn, from her own ſolemn declaration to Rolla, that "ſhe had put by all ran-"corous motive of private vengeance." What produced this wonderful change in the motives for her conduct? It cannot be aſcribed ſolely to the determination of Pizarro to deſtroy Alonzo. She had been too often a witneſs of his bloody and rapacious conduct. The wrongs of human nature, and of juſtice, had long before cried aloud for vengeance: but, not until a Rival croſſed her way, did Elvira feel a deſire to revenge theſe injuries perpetrated by Pizarro. At the cloſe of the Firſt Act ſhe expreſſes her

terror

terror and remorſe, and wiſhes to fly from ſuch dreadful Scenes. But, in ſpite of ſuch an avowal, we find that ſhe had accompanied, as a Warrior, Pizarro and his band of Robbers on *that very attack*, the horrors and cruelty of which ſhe had ſo pathetically deplored! And ſtill further to make the inconſiſtency of this *heteroclite* Character, ſhe not only accompanied the Spaniards on this dreadful occaſion, but alſo had diſplayed ſuch *warlike* bravery as to extort the praiſe from Pizarro, that "in War "ſhe was the Soldier's pattern." What muſt have been her conduct, to have merited *ſuch* praiſe from *ſuch* a character? That ſhe piqued herſelf upon her warlike proweſs with no ſmall degree of exultation, is evident, from her anſwer to Pizarro's exclamation, "Why had not "all men hearts like thine?" "Then," ſhe replies, "would thy brows this day have worn "the Crown of Quito!" The Character of Pizarro differs too much from the opinion we are led to form of it from Valverde's deſcription. For, from ſo very illiterate and unpoliſhed a Chief, bred up amidſt the dregs of the loweſt orders of Society, we ſcarcely could have expected either dignity of Language, or nobleneſs of Sentiment. But, on every occaſion, we find Pizarro deliver his thoughts in the ſame lofty Style with the other more dignified Characters; and, in his treatment of Rolla, he evinces ſuch

true

true generoſity of Soul, as is incompatible with the vindictive brutality of his general conduct. I am well aware that, in no human heart, is the Voice of humanity completely ſtifled; but Pizarro is repreſented to be ſuch a Monſter of revenge and cruel depravity, as to render his conduct to Rolla improbable and uncharacteriſtic. It is a juſt critical dogma, and may be applied to this, as well as every other dramatic Character:

"Servetur ad imum,
"Qualis ab incepto proceſſerit, et ſibi conſtet."

"Preſerve a juſt, conſiſtent plan,
"And let him end as he began."

The Character of Ataliba is but feebly ſketched. Rolla ſo eclipſes the luſtre of his Maſter's fame, that we almoſt loſe ſight of this Offspring of the Peruvian Deity. When he did appear, we might have expected a Style dignified, and ſuited to his Rank and Character; but, as I ſhall point out hereafter, he generally diſplays an equal poverty in Style and Sentiment. The Character of Las Caſas exhibits traits which do honour to humanity, and affords a pleaſing contraſt to the other Spaniards leagued in this foul enterprize. His eloquence and heart-rending appeals might have ſoftened even the flinty hearts of his cruel and avaricious Countrymen. I have no heſitation in affirming, that the

the Character of Las Caſas is not only the moſt unexceptionable, but, likewiſe, that which is moſt juſtly entitled to our Sympathy, in the whole of this Drama. The diſtracting grief of Cora, as well as the violence of all her emotions, ſeems to me better fitted to excite the Sympathy of common minds, than to produce a ſimilar feeling in minds of a more juſt and refined ſenſibility. Alonzo occupies a conſiderable rank in the liſt of the Author's Characters. He is drawn in a very amiable, though not brilliant point of light. He forms, however, a ſtriking contraſt to Pizarro, and thus heightens the general intereſt of the Play. The Character is ſupported with uniform conſiſtency, and gains a conſiderable portion of the Spectator's regard and ſympathy. The Characters of the Peruvian Cacique, and blind Old Man, produce much dramatic effect; but the Manners of both are the reverſe of Peruvian. The former, deeply ſkilled in Rhetoric, manages his tropes and figures with no ſmall dexterity. He might be ſuppoſed to have ſtudied Oratory in the Schools, and have been verſed in the Chriſtian code of Religion. Yet, as a Pagan Chief, he muſt be ſuppoſed to be wedded to the ſuperſtitions of his Country. Valverde appears at firſt to be a thorough-paced Villain. Elvira conſiders his attachment to her as the offspring of "baſe lucre and mean fraud." His reſcuing Elvira,

Elvira, therefore, at the certain riſk of his life, is a palpable contradiction to the ſelfiſh meanneſs of his general conduct.

The reſt of the inferior Characters are exempt from any particular obſervation, as they merely ſerve either to ſwell the train of their Superiors, or to connect the dialogue, and ſupply a few links to the chain of Incidents.

On the Sentiments.

TRAGEDY not only requires that the Manners ſhould be characteriſtic, but alſo that the Sentiments ſhould be conformable to the Characters. The conformity of the Sentiments ought to appear in the predominant Manners of the reſpective Characters; and likewiſe ſhould be manifeſted in every varied ſituation or circumſtance in which they may be placed. In Pizarro, great ſcope was afforded, both for originality and copiouſneſs of Sentiment. The repreſentation of a People emerging from Barbariſm, and governed by peculiar Manners and Cuſtoms, both of Religion and civil Polity, was favourable to a development of ſtriking and affecting Sentiment. But no ſuch originality of Sentiment, no ſtriking contraſt of the peculiar modification of Character to be expected from a difference in Manners, Cuſtoms and Preju-

dices is to be found in this Play. On the contrary, we find the Peruvian Characters make frequent and ſolemn appeals to the Deity. They acknowledge his peculiar Providence and moral Attributes; and their conceptions of Man's ſupreme Good, both in the preſent and a future State, are ſtrictly conſonant to the moſt enlightened ſyſtem of Religion*.

I ſhall ſelect ſome ſtriking examples, to ſhew that this diſcrepance, between the Manners and Sentiments, is not merely accidental or occaſional; but pervades the whole of the ſentiments and language of the Peruvian Characters. Orozimbo (as before obſerved) utters Sentiments altogether inconſiſtent with the Character of a Peruvian Cacique. He calls Alonzo

* "The Peruvians," ſays Dr. Robertſon, "had not indeed made ſuch progreſs in obſervation or inquiry, as to "have attained juſt conceptions of the Deity; nor was "there in their language any proper name or appellation "of the Supreme Power, which intimated that they had "formed any idea of him as the Creator and Governor of "the World."

Some of their ſuperſtitions, mentioned by the ſame Writer, were cruel and deteſtable. "On the death of the "Incas, or any other eminent Perſonage, a conſiderable "number of their Attendants were put to death, and in"terred in their Guacas, that he might appear in the next "World in his former Dignity. At the celebration of "the funeral obſequies of Huana Capac, one thouſand of "his Attendants were put to death."

" the Guardian-Angel of Peru ;" boaſts of the " treaſure he had ſtored in Heaven ;" remarks that, as he had " never trembled before God, " why ſhould he tremble before man?" and dies with importuning bleſſings on Elvira, and praying that Heaven may pardon and turn his murderers' hearts. Theſe Sentiments, which would have flowed with propriety from the lips of Las Caſas under ſimilar circumſtances, are altogether unſuitable to the notions and character of a Peruvian. Rolla ſcarcely utters a Sentiment that is not at variance with Peruvian Manners. That fine piece of declamation, his Addreſs to the Soldiers, ſo flagrantly violates Peruvian ideas of Government, Morals, and Religion ; and is ſo evidently calculated to ſerve a temporary purpoſe, that it muſt be conſidered (though beautiful when viewed apart) as extraneous matter, tending to break the unity of Action in a Drama, otherwiſe ſufficiently negligent in its Compoſition. But the violation of propriety in the Sentiments is not ſolely confined to political, moral, and theological Subjects. It occurs in the mode of familiar alluſion and common expreſſion. Witneſs the anſwer of the blind Old Man to the Boy, who, on the report of Cannon, ſhouts " There " is fire and ſmoke ;" when this old Peruvian remarks, " Yes, *Fire* is the weapon of thoſe " *fiends*." Such an alluſion from a Peruvian, and

a Pagan, is ſo palpably abſurd, that to excite ridicule it needs only to be mentioned.

Elvira utters Sentiments worthy of a more dignified Character. Indeed, her Character and Sentiments are ſo much at variance, that great part of the beauty of the latter is obſcured by the inconſiſtency of the former. In the firſt Act, when ordered by Pizarro to retire, ſhe breaks out into the following beautiful and energetic appeal, ill ſuited to the general tenor of her Conduct, "Oh! Men! Men! ungrate-"ful and perverſe! Oh, Woman! ſtill affec-"tionate, though wrong'd! The Beings to "whoſe Eyes you turn for animation, hope and "rapture, through the days of mirth and revel-"ling; and on whoſe boſoms, in the hour of "ſore calamity, you ſeek for reſt and conſola-"tion.—THEM, *when the pompous follies of your* "*mean ambition* are the queſtion, You treat as "Play-things or as Slaves."

The pompous follies of your mean ambition ſounds ſtrangely from the lips of a woman who had ſacrificed Friends, Country, and Reputation on the Altar of that Idol. Her anſwer to Pizarro, who demands, if he ſhould rejoice at his recent defeat, manifeſts an Oſſian-like ſublimity of Style and Imagery, not equalled by any other paſſage in the Tragedy. "No! I would "have thee cold and dark, as the night that "follows the departed Storm; ſtill and ſullen,

as

" as the awful pauſe that precedes Nature's con-
" vulſion: Yet I would have thee feel aſſured
" that a new morning ſhall ariſe, when the
" Warrior's Spirit ſhall ſtalk forth, nor fear the
" future, nor lament the paſt." But this ſplen-did paſſage is liable to the objection of unfit-neſs to the Character. The feeling, agonized Elvira, who ſhrunk from the bare mention of the attack which led to Pizarro's diſcomfiture, ought not to have uttered ſuch Sentiments of Warlike enterprize and valour. Many of the Maternal Sentiments of Cora are moving and pathetic; yet, others appear to be overſtrained, and ſurfeit by exceſs of feeling. The conſtant whine of morbid Senſibility, inſtead of increa-ſing Sympathy, deadens its force. Her deſcrip-tion of the three maternal Holidays ſeems to me far-fetched, and offenſive to good taſte. The " white bloſſoms of his teeth breaking the crim-
" ſom buds that did incaſe them," is truly a prettineſs of expreſſion, ill ſuited to the deſcrip-tion of one of the moſt painful maladies of ſuf-fering infancy. In the ſame Scene the *Antitbe-ſis* of Perſons, which Mr. Dangle in the Critic juſtly ſtyles " a moſt eſtabliſhed figure,", is dex-trouſly introduced.

Tilburina. " Canſt thou reject the SUPPLIANT and
" the DAUGHTER too?"

Governor. " NO MORE. I would not have thee plead
" in vain. The FATHER ſoftens, but the GOVERNOR
" is fixed."

Cora

Cora. "This timid exceſs of Love, producing "Fear, inſtead of Valour, flatters, but does not con- "vince me. The WIFE is incredulous."

Rolla. "And is the MOTHER unbelieving too?"

Cora. "NO MORE. Do with me as you pleaſe."

In the following Scene there is a Sentiment uttered by the Boy, ſo pleaſing and natural, that I cannot forbear tranſcribing it.

Old Man. "But ſhould the Enemy come, they will "drag thee from me, my Boy."

Boy. "Impoſſible, Grandfather! for they will ſee "at once that you are old and blind, and cannot do "without me."

How forced, bald, and unnatural, does the following Sentiment of Cora appear, when contraſted with the ſimplicity of the one juſt quoted! Rolla entreats Cora to "liſten to Alonzo's "Friend." She replies, "You bid me liſten "to the World; who was not Alonzo's Friend?" Never before, I verily believe, did an afflicted Heroine utter ſo frigid a Conceit. It is the very Antipodes of natural feeling and correct taſte.

The Soliloquy of Rolla, on entering Alonzo's Dungeon, contains ſome beautiful Sentiment; but labours under the charge of being ill-timed. For Rolla ought to be ſo intent on effecting Alonzo's releaſe, as to have neither time nor inclination to indulge in a long ſentimental effuſion. It may juſtly be obſerved, that moſt of the Soliloquies abound in wire-drawn Sentiment,

ment, to a degree, which fatigues the Attention, and leſſens the Intereſt of the Audience.

On the Style.

THE Style, or Language of the drama, has always been conſidered an eſſential part of its conſtitution. The Style of Pizarro forms an anomaly in Engliſh Tragedy. I know not how to characteriſe it, except by the expreſſion of "Proſe run mad." There have been few Tragedies in our Language written in Proſe, which have gained applauſe either on the Stage or in the Cloſet. One or two, which have ſucceeded, were compoſed in a different Style from Pizarro. George Barnwell and the Stranger are founded on domeſtic and familiar Life; and, therefore, do not admit of an elevated poetic Style. Pizarro, on the contrary, contains lofty characters and ſentiments, illuſtrated by figurative and poetic imagery, but not elevated by regular Metre. That regular Metre is *eſſential* to Poetry, I by no means affirm; but, to conſtitute a perfect Poem or Tragedy in our Tongue, it ſeems an indiſpenſable requiſite. For to *pleaſe*, as well as to *inſtruct*, is a legitimate object of Poetry—"Aut prodeſſe volunt, aut *delectare* poetæ." The obſervation of a celebrated Poet and Critic, Dr. Beattie, "That in Tragedy the verſification

"may

" may be both harmonious and dignified, becauſe " the Characters are taken chiefly from High " Life, and the Events from a remote Period; " and becauſe the higher Poetry is permitted to " imitate Nature, not as it is, but in that ſtate of " perfection in which it might be," applies aptly to the drama under conſideration. Its Subject would have admitted, nay indeed at times demanded, both a dignified and poetic Style.

Ariſtotle in his definition of *Tragedy*, maintains, that the Style of the Tragic drama ſhould be " agreeably *reliſhing*, and contain Number, Verſe, and Harmony." Blank-Verſe, I conceive, is very properly the Metre in which Tragedy, in our Language, moſt ſucceſsfully conveys both delight and inſtruction: For, as an elegant Writer * juſtly obſerves, " It riſes gracefully " into the ſublime; it can ſlide happily into the " familiar; haſten its career, if impelled by ve- " hemence of paſſion; pauſe in the heſitation of " doubt; appear lingering and languid in de- " jection and ſorrow; is capable of varying its " accent, and adapting its harmony to the Sen- " timent it ſhould convey, and the Paſſion it " would excite, with all the power of muſical " expreſſion."

Shakeſpear, Otway, and Rowe have ſhewn how pathetic ſentiment and dignified declama-

* Eſſay on the Writings and Genius of Shakeſpear.

tion

tion may be enriched by Metre. Why then depart from ſuch Models? Was it the intention to improve upon them? If ſo, the object has not been obtained. For although Pizarro be not deſtitute of harmonious and beautiful paſſages, yet, upon the whole, it exhibits a patchwork of regular Metre, inflated Proſe, and vulgar phraſeology. Sometimes the Language ſoars into the region of Blank Verſe, and is indeed only Proſe to the Eye:

"On Iron pennons borne, the blood-ſtain'd Vulture
"Cleaves the Storm, yet is the plumage cloſeſt
"To her breaſt, ſoft as the Cygnet's down, and
"O'er her unſhell'd brood the murm'ring Ring-Dove
"Sits not more gently."

In a few other paſſages, where the Imagery is grand, and the Sentiments elevated, according to the warmth of paſſion and dignity of the Speaker, an approach is made towards regular Metre. Take Elvira's ſoliloquy at the cloſe of the third Act, as affording an inſtance of ſublime deſcription, disfigured by tumid phraſeology, forced inverſion of Style, and a neglect of uniform metrical arrangement. "Yes thou un-
"daunted! Thou whom yet no mortal hazard
"has appalled! Thou who on Panama's brow
"*didſt* make alliance with the raving elements,
"that tore the ſilence of that horrid night!
"when thou *didſt* follow, as thy Pioneer, the
"craſhing

" craſhing thunder's drift; and, ſtalking o'er
" the trembling earth, *didſt* plant thy banners
" by the red Volcano's mouth. Thou, who when
" battling on the Sea, and thy brave Ship *was*
" blown to ſplinters, *waſt* ſeen *as thou didſt* be-
" ſtride a fragment of the ſmoaking wreck, to
" wave thy glittering ſword above thy head, *as*
" *thou wouldſt* defy the World in that ex-
" tremity!"

The paſſages moſt entitled to approbation, on account of Style, are thoſe which approach neareſt to Blank Verſe; but, for want of attention to metrical uniformity, theſe ſuffer a degradation by their being incorporated with downright vulgar proſe. Not that I conceive every ſubordinate Character in Tragedy ſhould deliver a meſſage, or utter the moſt trivial thought, in Blank Verſe. Shakeſpear has drawn the proper line. Blank Verſe is always uſed by this Poet in the loftier Scenes of Tragedy, where the Sentiments and Characters demand an elevated Style: but, in the leſs intereſting Scenes, where familiar Characters are introduced, he judiciouſly deſcends to a correſpondent Style and Language. But even granting that *numerous* and *elevated* Proſe may be adapted to the more dignified Characters of Tragedy with propriety and effect, I am ſure it will not be denied, that all vulgar expreſſions and low ideas tend to degrade ſuch perſonages. When we hear Ataliba,

the

the Monarch and Repreſentative of the God of the Peruvians, expreſs himſelf more than once on the ſame ſubject, in the following terms, Ridicule, inſtead of Sympathy, muſt be excited.

Enter ATALIBA *wounded, with* ORANO *and Officers.*

Ataliba. "My wound is bound. Believe me, the hurt is *nothing*, I may return to the Fight."

Again,

"Thanks, thanks, my Children, I am well, believe it,
"The blood once ſtopt, the wound was *nothing* *."

On the Moral.

THAT the tragic Drama may be rendered a powerful auxiliary to Virtue and good Morals, has been generally admitted. For to excite emotions which tend to purify and ſtrengthen the various ſympathies of our Nature † is, (or ought

* The Author ſeems in this inſtance to have only ſtopt ſhort, "on the precipice of Abſurdity." Indeed it reminds me of a Line, ſaid to have been ſpoken by one of Dryden's Heroes (I believe, in 'Tyrannic Love.')

"My wound is great, becauſe it is ſo ſmall."

To which a Wit in the Boxes inſtantly replied,

"Then 'twould be greater, were it none at all."

† Ariſtotle takes in as part of his definition of Tragedy, the following Sentence, "That without the aſſiſtance of "Nar-

ought to be) its peculiar province and deſign. When it attains this noble moral end, by means which ſerve at the ſame time to warm the imagination, gratify the judgment, and pleaſe the taſte, it then riſes to its higheſt pitch of excellence. There are many Moral beauties in the play of Pizarro. Poetical Juſtice is almoſt ſtrictly attended to, by puniſhing Vice, and rendering Virtue triumphant. The duties of Loyalty and Patriotiſm are ſtrongly enforced. The endearing ſenſibilities of conjugal and maternal affection make forcible appeals to the heart. Notwithſtanding theſe excellencies, it is ſtill liable to objections on the ſcore of morality: and theſe not of a ſlight and trivial nature. It certainly would be uncandid, if not unjuſt, to impute to the Author of this drama, a *fixed deſign* of exalting Natural, to an equality with Revealed Religion. But I am convinced, from his manner of contrafting the Characters and Conduct of the Peruvians and Spaniards, that ſuch an Effect is likely to be produced. The exalted notions of Religion and Morality, ſo *uniformly* characterizing the Manners and Conduct of the Peruvians, and which are ſo ſtudiouſly placed in oppoſition to the baſe, bloody, and atrocious Actions and Sentiments of the principal Characters of the Spaniards, confirm the truth of

" Narration it perfectly refines in us all ſorts of paſſions, by " means of Pity and Terror."

this

this remark. There lurks ſomething inſidious in that Sentiment of Rolla in his Addreſs to Pizarro. "I thought forgiveneſs of injuries had been the Chriſtian's precept, thou ſeeſt it is the Peruvian's practice." For it has been proved that the Peruvians were tainted with groſs ſuperſtitions of a barbarous nature; and Hiſtory farther bears teſtimony, that the life of a Brother was ſacrificed by Ataliba, from motives of Ambition and ſuppoſed perſonal Safety. When the Peruvian Cacique intreats Heaven to pardon and turn his murderers' hearts, he not only borrows Chriſtian precepts, but follows the Chriſtian Example. Why thus violate Hiſtoric probability? What motive can we aſſign for the attempt to demonſtrate, that the Religion and Morality of the Peruvians were equal, if not ſuperior, to the lights of Revealed Religion? But it may be ſaid, that the virtues of Las Caſas and Alonzo exhibit ſuch exalted proofs of the excellence of the Chriſtian doctrines, as to juſtify this Author in ſo ſtrongly *contraſting* his Characters. It is true they form a ſplendid exception to the general charge: Yet, ſomething like diſtributive juſtice ſhould have been obſerved in his conduct towards the two Nations. The Peruvians are elevated *above* the reſt of mankind: The Spaniards degraded *below* the ſcale of humanity.

If any Nation (in other reſpects nearly barbarous) had attained ſuch juſt and refined no-

tions

tions of Piety and Morals, as the Peruvians are repreſented to be endowed with; it would have been right and even inſtructive to have pourtrayed ſuch ſtriking and important facts. But a People ſo circumſtanced have not appeared upon our Globe. It is therefore to falſify the Hiſtory of the human Mind and Character, to repreſent ſuch Phænomena as having had exiſtence. The frequent and ſolemn appeals to the Deity introduced in this Play, deſerve ſevere reprehenſion. They tend to leſſen that habitual reverence for the ſupreme Being, which ought always to be cheriſhed, and they are oppoſed to all the principles of good Writing and Taſte. It is an eaſy matter to ſupply the want of Sentiment, and force of Expreſſion, by invoking the Name of the Deity. Our cuſtomary aſſociation of every thing ſtriking and awful with that Name excites a powerful emotion in the Mind, and thus elevates and impreſſes a Sentiment which would otherwiſe have fallen lifeleſs from the Speaker's lips. But let it be remembered, that habit deſtroys the force of this aſſociation; and that when the aſſociated idea becomes familiar, the ſentiment ſinks into its own inſignificancy, and ceaſes to affect even vulgar minds, though it ſtill continues to diſguſt thoſe of the more rational and enlightened.

The Character of Elvira is calculated to attract more admiration and eſteem, than is conſiſtent

ſiſtent with a juſt ſenſe of female decorum and virtuous ſenſibility. She is not qualified for a Tragic Heroine. Her departure from the ſtrict rules of female chaſtity and refined delicacy, is too groſs to be palliated by a ſhew of half-ſtifled repentance, lofty ſentiment, and energy of character. The heroic Actions of Rolla ariſe from motives ſo romantic, and are fraught with ſo much danger to ſound Morals, as to be better calculated to excite admiration than to ſerve for example. A Platonic affection for youth and beauty in the other Sex may not be problematic with many; but I will venture to maintain, that the open avowal of Rolla's paſſion, (however ſublime) for Cora, who was become a Wife and Mother, (Characters ſacred in the eſtimation of all who reverence the moſt important inſtitution of civilized life) is a profanation of legitimate Sentiment, and ought not to have been aſſigned as the great exciting Cauſe of all that Hero's atchievements.

To ſum up the Character of the Drama.—It muſt be conſidered as poſſeſſing many faults, with ſome beauties. When compared with the excellent dramatic Works of our beſt Writers, its pretenſions are too feeble to be worthy of notice. It ſuffers even by compariſon with ſome of modern date. Its chief *defects* are, a violation of all Hiſtoric probability; a want of connection and coincidence in the Plot; a Diction unſuitable

ſuitable to the genius of Tragic compoſition in our Language; little attention to the preſervation of conſiſtency in the Characters and Manners; and, finally, the Moral is tarniſhed by unjuſt views of human nature. Its *beauties* conſiſt chiefly in pathetic Sentiment, and energetic declamation; an attention to dramatic ſituation and ſtage effect; and, laſt, though not leaſt, a diſplay of theatrical Pomp in the adventitious decorations of Song, Proceſſions, and Scenery *.

* Yet this play appears to me, with regard to Muſic and Scenic decoration, ſplendidly inſipid. We may poſſeſs, (as was obſerved by a Critic thirty years ago on the dramatic productions of that period) the Robes and Proceſſions of Tragedy, but want her rouſing and animated Spirit. Indeed, as Foote has obſerved in his occaſional Prologue, "Tailors are deemed the only Poets now," and we may add, that "Carpenters and Scene Painters are the only Actors for bringing full Houſes; but this will ever be the caſe till Public Taſte and Spirit throw juſt and neceſſary Contempt on ſuch frippery exhibitions as Nature and Reaſon mutually bluſh at." DRAMATIC CENSOR.

FINIS.

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